

THE GIRL OPPOSITE

By Beverly Slauson

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Travers was looking backward over his life, as he sat, revolver in hand, before the mirror in the upper room of his closed house, and it was strange how all the interests of the mature man's life narrowed to those of the boy of long ago.

Pictures flashed across his mental vision and he saw himself again, a little boy, standing before that same window and holding his father's hand.

"Why mustn't I play with the little girl across the street?" he asked his father.

"Because this is a Puritan town, sonny," replied the man.

"What does that mean, father?"

"Ask your mother, son."

But it was long before he learned that the man across the street was a famous atheist lecturer and shunned in horror by the narrow society of the little place, whose ostracism extended to the loyal wife and the little girl.

Travers' father had been willing enough to be friendly with the man, but it was the women who ruled the town, and he had shrugged his shoulders and gone his way, as the rest of the men did.

From his window upstairs the little boy had stared at the girl, and for hours the children would watch each other, ignorant of the cause that prevented them from playing together.

Later the little boy had gone to school, a boarding school in a distant city. There the interests of school-days drove the thought of the little girl out of his mind.

So completely, in fact that, when he returned he did not at first recognize the young girl of fourteen whose face he saw at the window opposite.

"Who are those people across the road?" he asked his mother, with an

interest whose cause he was careful to conceal.

"The same," she answered. "That is Danvers, the abominable atheist lecturer, John. I hope that you will have nothing to do with any of them at any time."

For views did not broaden readily in the little town, and it was inconceivable to the inhabitants that they should tolerate a man who openly ad-



Pictures Flashed Across His Mental Vision

vocated such views, however honestly.

Time passed. John Travers went to college. Now the whirl of life had caught him up and only the most elusive memories remained of the girl at the window. Yet, when he came home with his degree, he found himself looking across the narrow street at a young woman who watched him from her window. And this time